

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

DREAMS AND DREAMING.

THE LITERATURE AND CURIOSITY OF DREAMS. A COMBINED TREATISE ON DREAMS, DREAMERS AND DREAMED; DREAMS AND DREAMERS; AND THE AUTHENTICATED DREAMS AND DREAMERS ALLEGED IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES. BY JAMES GRIFFIN, M. A., LONDON, ETC. 12mo. New York: Robert E. Johnson & Co.

Men of excellent repute for wisdom, common sense, and especially for fervid piety, have frequently not merely entertained but conspicuously avowed a lively faith in the providential and prophetic character of dreams. How far this, with the well educated, has ever deserved the respectable name of positive belief, it would require a nice and extensive investigation to determine. Few of us are very critical of our impressions. In certain modes of the mind we have in them a kind of vague confidence; we act upon them, though we may keep our motives private for fear of ridicule; and the whole matter being very loosely and haphazardly entertained, there is not much difficulty in squaring this odd event with some vision sufficiently vivid to be remembered, and which might have been the result of an extra course of cold meat taken without sufficient pepper before retiring. It is easy to say that Heaven warns us of impending danger as signifies to us an approaching good, through the medium of a dream; it is also easy to say that Heaven does nothing of the kind, and one assertion is about as much as the other. It is altogether an affair of cerebral impression more or less permanent. We remember to have read somewhere of a gentleman who was unfortunate as to be chased on a certain occasion by a bull. Forty-five years he could not conquer without the dreamy impression that the bull was again after him in hot pursuit. A bit of cheese exposed him to the prill of being gored, a bit of mustard caused a toss, and he could never take a morsel of beef before bed-time without being pursued over meadows entirely destitute of fence, by some avenging father of the herd.

In the two elegant volumes before us, who are of English manufacture, has compiled an antiquated miscellany of dream-literature. The second volume is merely a collection of remarkable dream-stories gathered from the books of all ages and of all languages; but in the first we have, if not a very professed at least an amusing summary of opinions, and an investigation of the physical and moral causes of dreams. A faith in them arises from the general agreement of mankind that "it is convenient to have a back Providence which work to order in imperial Empires." "It says Mr. Seaford, "a crop of consecrated oak-hens to the pip of the negligia, were off their feet, it was dimly intimated that two impudent fleets were to ride an insatiate burion on the weighted tide, or that the swords and spears of scores of thousands were to rest upon the tented field glorious and unashamed. It is only engrossed in the distended may of an earthquake, or the life of a district consigned to scuttling perdition by the hideous ruin and combustion of volcanic fire—through the opened ascent of Inferno strange fires flashed by lightning over a half a cowering world; or crowds of eight million devils, crushed and bellowed forth a thundering remonstrance, it was dimly intimated that it would be prudent for some surviving goatish and whimpering sheepish to forego the day that should give them the right of tending without scandal their savory cattle in common. Divination is easily recognizable in such examples as these, as a *voluntas et voluntas*, or the doctrine of a particular prophet." It is easy to see from this extract that Mr. Seaford does not come to the work in any very supercilious spirit. But for "the up" or "the negligia," he would eat the most sacred food reduced upon the altar of a godron in a hoisted condition, without a single compunctions enough.

The Jews, as all who read their Bibles know, were great believers in dreams." But Mr. Seaford points out that taking the inspiration of many of the visions recorded in the Old Testament for granted, "it will be recognized that neither God nor good angel ever informed us which was not to answer some moral dictate or grand economical purpose." All anthropomorphic dreams like those of Joseph in the Old Testament, were their own credentials, and had a transcendently important object. These were to be distinguished, as indeed they were by Solomon, from the more fitting brain-clouds arising from "multitudinous of business." Homer makes the same distinction between the dreamer, the messenger of Jove, and the more *equus* incidental to any sleeping individual. This reservation in favor of important dreams, may enhance the respectability of the subject, but if there are to be special and divine impressions upon the slumbering brains of monarchs, statesmen and members of Congress, to warn them of impending dangers, we do not see why, in the universality of Providence, a dream of humble dimensions may not be dispatched to let Mary know that Tom is about to prove false to his plighted vows, or to reveal to Biddy the cook-maid, the name of the pretty-faced delinquent who carried off the spouse. The astrologist, to be sure, may be jealous of their superiority in sleep, as in *dilectio*. Natura can be said strikingly to be a part of the appendages of high rank. Catherine de Medici, that amiable personage, declared that "every single accident of her life, happy or not, had been foretold to her by a dream or otherwise"; and Mrs. Wickliffe, we remember, was of the same opinion. Of the divine origin of dreams we have sought in vain for Mr. Seaford's private opinion. He does nothing but shake his head, tell wonderful stories, and declare that there is a great deal to be said upon both sides of the question.

The truth is, the extreme ease with which most dreams may be traced to quite physical, mortal and terrestrial causes, is extremely unfavorable to the theory of their celestial origin. There seems to be one reason for tracking Jupiter the dream that you have every now in your body, when it may have been naturally occasioned by an unusually bad head. You dream that you are hung, the sheriff adjuring your last crust and the chaplain conducting you last devotions, and wade to find the collar of your night-vote too tightly buttoned. A sudden noise resembling the report of a gun raises you to the rank of a trigger-head and puts you in the very thick of a heavy fight. So, too, the events of waking life are carried into sleep—hopes, ambitions, desires, failures, disappointments. We reach that summit of ambition which so often, in the busy day-time, has been found too steep and distant for our nimble effort. We do in our dreams all that we have desired to do—we sing, write, dance, sport, philosophize, shoot, or play whilst to admiration. "Dreams," says Mr. Seaford, "are the safety-valves for disappointment—a slim consolation, to be sure, but better than none in this weary world."

We come now to "Oneirocritica; or, Modes of Dream Interpretation." This will strike all the old ladies, and the young, as a very important part of the subject; for what use is it to be at the trouble of dreaming if you are not to know what your dreams portend? Why should a celestial messenger be sent down special to give you the night-mare, if you cannot understand what he is driving at? The Biblical method, we are told, is the grand style of dream-interpretation. There are dreams which do and dreams which do not require or admit of explanation. When a dream came, in the Scriptures, in the guise of prophetic symbol or allegory, recourse was had to the skill of interpreters. "Given or discovered the hero or chief personage, the problem was to recognize the other figures; if the fortunes of Joseph (Gen. xxxvii, 7) were identified with the sheaf of corn, and those of his brothers with other sheaves that paid it homage, it was bitterly accepted by all that he arrogated to himself a future superiority over the members of his family." But the art of interpreting dreams had any fixed rules. The Magi of Persia and the soothsayers of Greece were perpetually making blunders. The Magi were identified with the sheaf of corn, and those of his brothers with other sheaves that paid it homage, it was bitterly accepted by all that he arrogated to himself a future superiority over the members of his family." But the art of interpreting dreams had any fixed rules. The Magi of Persia and the soothsayers of Greece were perpetually making blunders. The Magi were identified with the sheaf of corn, and those of his brothers with other sheaves that paid it homage, it was bitterly accepted by all that he arrogated to himself a future superiority over the members of his family." But the art of interpreting dreams had any fixed rules. The Magi of Persia and the soothsayers of Greece were perpetually making blunders. The Magi were identified with the sheaf of corn, and those of his brothers with other sheaves that paid it homage, it was bitterly accepted by all that he arrogated to himself a future superiority over the members of his family."

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